

Governor Carney Announces Expansion of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Statewide

Free, high-quality children's books now available to families across Delaware

WILMINGTON, Del. – Governor John Carney and First Lady Tracey Quillen Carney today joined American icon Dolly Parton to announce the statewide expansion of her namesake Imagination Library book gifting program and to encourage parents of young children across Delaware to participate.

Watch announcement video on [YouTube](#) or [Facebook](#).

“I am so excited to be working with Governor and First Lady Carney to bring my Imagination Library to children and families across Delaware!” said **Ms. Parton**. “It takes visionary leaders to make this possible, and I can’t thank them enough. It is such an important time to share the gift of books and reading with as many children as we can, and I know Delaware families will love receiving a specially selected book in the mail each month.”

Children whose parents enroll them with [Dolly Parton's Imagination Library](#) through Delaware libraries receive one new book in the mail each month from birth until the child's fifth birthday at no cost to the family, creating a personal library of as many as 60 books that can help form the foundation of a child's early reading experience. Information and registration are available [online through the Delaware Division of Libraries](#).

Books are selected by a national panel of early childhood literacy experts who review hundreds of children's books each year and choose those that best fit the needs of children as they learn and grow.

*"A healthy reading habit motivates, inspires and encourages creativity among children and adults alike," said **Governor Carney**. "One of the most important things we can do to improve childhood literacy is to give our children access to books, especially during this challenging time. It's a simple but powerful idea. That's why Delaware is proud to partner with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library to improve literacy in our state. I want to thank our state librarian, Annie Norman, and my wife, Tracey, for spearheading this important effort in Delaware."*

Governor Carney announced a pilot launch of the Imagination Library program in five Delaware school districts in his [2020 State of the State](#) address. Beginning in February, the Division of Libraries partnered with 13 local public libraries to make the program available to families within the pilot districts. So far, more than 3,800 children have been enrolled in the program and received more than 16,000 books.

The Imagination Library program is also an important component of the First Chance Delaware initiative for children, led by First Lady Carney. The mission of First Chance Delaware includes promoting learning readiness through literacy and parent-child engagement.

"It's a great privilege for me to serve as the honorary chair of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library program in Delaware," said **First Lady Carney**. "The quantity and quality of early language experience, starting at birth, correlates to children's academic success at ages nine and 10—the target of our state's grade-level reading campaign—which then correlates to the likelihood of high-school graduation, which correlates

to virtually every positive life outcome from then on. Expanding the Imagination Library program in Delaware is a great investment in our families and in our future.”

For public libraries across Delaware, the Imagination Library program will serve as a springboard for children and parents to engage with their local libraries, participate in library programming and take advantage of the many resources libraries have to offer.

“It’s never too early to start reading to children,” said Delaware State Librarian **Dr. Annie Norman**. “Kids who read succeed! Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library helps develop the reading and library habit, a foundation for success throughout life.”

Parents who enrolled their children with the Imagination Library earlier this year through pilot school districts have already reported positive results, especially in light of the changes to daily lives and routines as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The books we have received have helped a lot with his vocabulary and his ability to express himself,” said Lewes mom **Ashely Durden** about her son Quentin, who has been enrolled in the Imagination Library Program for the last two years. “Thank you for bringing reading to everyone in our district and our state; it’s a really great resource to get new books to children at a very young age.”

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